

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1571

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY NIABAT

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E9\$9.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AG, MO, SS, TS

SUBJ: NOUIRA STATEMENT CRITICAL OF ALGERIA RE SAHARA

1. DURING DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD) CENTRAL COMMITTEE ANNUAL MEETING ON JANUARY 30, PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA INCLUDED REMARKS ON SAHARA CONFLICT IN SPEECH DEVOTED LARGELY TO DOMESTIC ISSUES. NOUIRA TOOK NOTE OF DANGER THAT THIS ACUTE CRISIS COULD BE TRANSFORMED INTO A FRATRICIDAL WAR AND ASKED IF MAGHREBIANS ARE NOT PUTTING THEIR COUNTRIES ON THE ROAD TO AN INFERNAL CYCLE FOR REASONS HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH THE REAL INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE. ARE WE, HE ADDED, BECOMING INVOLUNTARY PAWNS IN A GAME WHOSE RULES ARE LAID DOWN ELSEWHERE? HE SUMMARIZED THE INTEREST OF THE MAGHREBIANS IN THE SAHARA AS BEING THE REMOVAL OF A COLONIAL POWER, SAID TUNISIA IS AS MUCH ATTACHED AS ANYONE TO THE UN CHARTER AND THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION, AND ASSERTED THAT TUNISIA HAD APPRAISED THE SAHARA SITUATION TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE POSITIONS OF COUNTRIES BORDERING THE WESTERN SAHARA AND CONCERNED WITH ITS DECOLONIZATIONDV

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2. NOUIRA THEN DEPLORED THAT TUNISIA'S POSITION, "DICTATED BY EXCELLENT INTENTIONS AND A SINCERE DESIRE TO CONCILIATE BROTHERS IN CONFLICT," HAD BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD TO THE POINT THAT REMONSTRANCES HAD TAKEN ON THE MOST \$*483,\$)6 59,3. SLOGANS, HE SAID, HAD BEEN ADDRESSED TO PEOPLE OVER THE HEADS OF THEIR GOVERNMENTYN A PRACTICE HE HAD THOUGHT DEFINITELY BANNED IN THE MACHREK AS WELL AS IN THE MAGHREB. HE ASSERTED THAT TUNISIA DOES NOT HAVE MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE WHICH "WE HAVE TRIED IN VAIN FOR YEARS TO SETYE AMICABLY WITH LIBYA." FINALLY, NOUIRA DECLARED THAT TUNISIA WILL NOT SUBORDINATE COOPERATION BETWEEN NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO IDEOLOGICAL CRITERIA. NOUIRA CALLED ON ALGIERA AND MOROCCO TO RETURN TO REASON AND AVOID FURTHER BLOODSHED AND PROMISED THAT TUNISIA WILL SPARE NO EFFORT TO LEAD THE TWO COUNTRIES TO END THE FIGHTING.

3. COMMENT: THE GOT IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT ALGERIAN PROPAGANDA ATTACKS, AND IS CONCERNED THAT THE ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN CONFLICT WILL SPREAD AND TAKE ON WIDER IMPLICATIONS. NOUIRA AVOIDED THE APPEARANCE OF TAKING SIDES IN THE CONFLICT BUT GOT'S PREVIOUS SUPPORT FOR MOROCCO AND HIS CRITICISM OF ALGERIA'S PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN LEFT LITTLE DOUBT ABOUT WHERE TUNISIA STANDS. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA INCIDENTALLY MADE NO REFERENCE TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. SSNLYE

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